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INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000611

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#)  
SUBJECT: KING REAFFIRMS INTENT TO HOLD PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS IN 2007; STRATEGY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

REF: A. AMMAN 528

- [1](#)B. TDX 315/09006-07
- [1](#)C. AMMAN 543
- [1](#)D. AMMAN 251
- [1](#)E. OSC GMP20061227647004

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR DAVID HALE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: KING ABDULLAH SAID HE REMAINS DETERMINED TO  
HOLD PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE IN 2007. BUT THE  
ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE UNDER THE SAME STATUTE THAT  
GOVERNED THE LAST PARLIAMENTARY POLL, IN 2003. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND: ADVOCATES FOR DIVERGENT COURSES

[1](#)2. (C) JORDANIANS PROMINENT IN THE EAST BANK ESTABLISHMENT  
AND THE SECURITY SERVICES (REF B) CONTINUE EFFORTS TO  
PERSUADE KING ABDULLAH TO USE HIS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY TO  
EXTEND THE TERM OF THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT BEYOND 2007, AND  
THUS POSTPONE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. THEY FEAR THAT THE  
UNSTABLE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES ON POOR  
JORDANIANS WILL ENABLE THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD'S PARTY, THE  
ISLAMIC ACTION FRONT, TO MOP UP IN THE POLLS. AT THE SAME  
TIME DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES AND THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT, THROUGH  
STREET DEMONSTRATIONS (REF F), PRESS COMMENTARY AND SPEECHES  
IN PARLIAMENT, HAVE BEEN CALLING FOR ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE  
AND UNDER A REFORMED ELECTIONS LAW. IN 2006, THE KING AND  
HIS TEAM OUTLINED AMBITIOUS PLANS TO REFORM THE PARTIES LAW  
AND THE ELECTORAL LAW. THE IDEA WAS THAT REFORMS OF THE  
PARTIES LAW WOULD ENCOURAGE MODERATES TO UNIFY NATIONALLY TO  
COMPETE EFFECTIVELY AGAINST THE ISLAMISTS. AS A COMPLEMENT,  
THE CHANGES TO THE ELECTORAL LAW WOULD ENCOURAGE PARTY  
FORMATION WITH A MIXED ELECTORAL SYSTEM, COMBINING BOTH  
DISTRICT AND PROPORTIONAL PARTY LISTS. IT WAS ALSO HOPED  
THAT THE PROCESS WOULD ENTAIL SOME REDISTRICTING. THE  
CURRENT DISTRICTING SCHEME FAVORS LOYAL, RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN  
EAST BANKERS, AT THE EXPENSE OF PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN CITY  
DWELLERS, WHO TEND TO SUPPORT THE ISLAMIST MOVEMENT.

KING CHOOSES MIDDLE COURSE

[1](#)3. (C) THE AMBASSADOR HAS HAD A FEW CONVERSATIONS WITH HE  
KING AND HIS OFFICE DIRECTOR, BASSEM AWADALLAH, IN THE LAST  
TEN DAYS ON THIS DEBATE. THE KING HAS EXPRESSED  
DETERMINATION TO HOLD ON SCHEDULE BOTH MUNICIPAL (REF D) AND  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 2007, DESPITE THE RISKS AND THE  
INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR'S ADVICE TO POSTPONE THEM. HOWEVER, HE  
HAS DECIDED THAT IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT, IT WOULD BE  
IMPOSSIBLE TO GAIN THE ASSENT OF PARLIAMENT (DOMINATED BY  
EAST BANKERS) FOR A REFORMED ELECTORAL LAW. HE HAD  
CONSIDERED PROMULGATING A NEW ELECTORAL LAW BY DECREE, BUT  
HAD CONCLUDED THIS, TOO, WOULD PROVOKE TROUBLING DISSENSION  
WITHIN HIS EAST-BANKER BASE. HE HAD DECIDED SUCH A MOVE

WOULD BE IMPRUDENT RIGHT NOW. HE ALSO COMPLAINED TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE BAKHIT GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO LAY THE NECESSARY GROUNDWORK TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE NEEDED POLITICAL REFORMS.

COMMENT

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14. (C) WITH THIS DECISION, THE KING APPEARS TO HAVE COMPLETED THE OUTLINES OF HIS STRATEGY FOR 2007 ELECTIONS. THE REFORMED MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT LAW RECENTLY PASSED (REF D) BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES WILL TRIGGER ELECTIONS IN MID-2007. THE GOVERNMENT WILL PUSH AHEAD WITH ITS PUBLIC WORKS CAMPAIGN (REF E) TO PLACATE POORER VOTERS. A NEW PARTY LED BY ESTABLISHMENT POLITICIANS (REF C) WILL ATTEMPT TO COORDINATE THE EFFORTS OF PRO-GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES AND THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS ON A NATIONAL BASIS. THE KING EXPECTS THE INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR TO HELP REFORM-ORIENTED CANDIDATES GAIN OFFICE, IN CONTRAST TO THE 2003 ELECTIONS WHEN THE INCUMBENT INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR PRODUCED A MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT THAT SUPPORTED THE MONARCHY, BUT OPPOSED ITS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORM AGENDA. NONETHELESS, THE VOTING THIS FALL WILL, AS IN 2003, TEND TO OVER-REPRESENT RURAL AREAS WHERE SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME SHOULD BE STRONGER.

15. (C) NOT YET ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY, THE KING'S DECISION WHEN IT DOES BECOME KNOWN IN JORDAN WILL DISAPPOINT DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS. IT WILL THRILL SUPPORTERS OF THE MONARCHY WHO HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT THE ISLAMIC ACTION FRONT'S APPEAL ON THE STREET.

16. (C) THE TWO ELECTIONS PLANNED FOR 2007 WILL BE AN IMPORTANT ADVANCE FOR JORDAN'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS. WHILE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS UNDER THE OLD LAW MEAN THE ADVANCE WILL NOT BE AS MARKED AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, THEY ARE CERTAINLY BETTER THAN NO VOTE AT ALL. OUR FOCUS NOW SHOULD

BE ON PROMOTING COMPETITIVE, FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE EXISTING LAW. THIS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT OBSCURE OTHER AREAS OF PROGRESS IN REFORM RECENTLY, INCLUDING LOWER HOUSE PASSAGE OF A NEW MUNICIPALITIES LAW, PROGRESS EXPECTED ON THE PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS LAW AND A FOIA, AND CREATION OF A NEW, INDEPENDENT BOARD TO COMBAT CORRUPTION.

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[HTTP://WWW.STATE.SGOV.GOV/P/NEA/AMMAN/](http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/AMMAN/)  
HALE